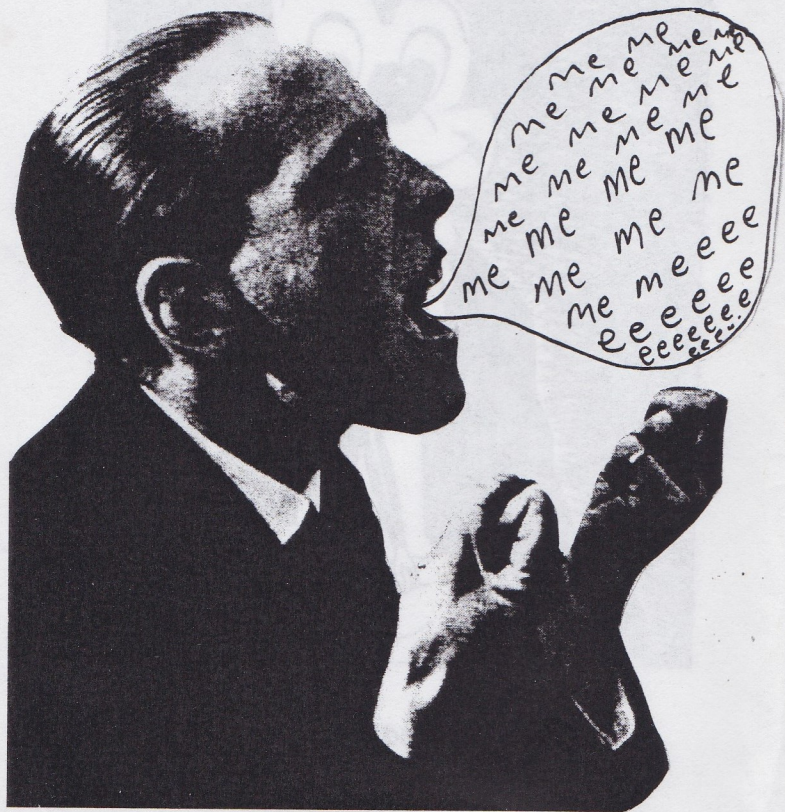




big hands #2





energy

1

*"The criticism is valid but neglects those rebels,
from penthouse to bar, who resist, every hour on
the hour, success according to that cult.
All those who feel their hours are too brief to devote
to the working of traps. In them the desire to be of
real use to the world deadlocks with the harking dread
of being used by it. Habit has made it impossible for them
to exist beyond the boundaries of the cult"*

-Nelson Algren
"Nonconformity"

Writhing our way through the mountains, blinded by snow and fog. The van is chugging along, amazingly unscathed by our constant abuse: filling it with eleven people and a thousand pounds of musical equipment and then pushing it up steep mountains. The dismal weather is fueling the nihilistic undertones of the tour. We stop on the side of the road at a particularly bleak zenith to burn yellow craters into the snow and take shots of whiskey, Orion looking straight out of a Jack London novel set against the snow taking deep droughts from the bottle, wearing a dumpstered rabbit-fur skullcap. The familiar trudge back to our cramped vessel, all dirty boots and hangovers. Beer and coffee, hand-rolled cigarettes and coughed-up phlegm for breakfast. Oatmeal packets in recovered Styrofoam cups and dinners of combos and dill pickle potato chips. Pacing the day by the amount of preferred addictive substance consumed.



Staying up late and waking up early. Making up for our self-destructive lifestyles with token gestures and capitulations, like fresh wheatgrass shots or a piece of fruit after a night of heavy drinking. Travel mugs and legs akimbo and we're pulling through the trash-strewn highways of Northern New Jersey, radio tuned in to the bland Clearchannel rock station. Who the fuck are these kids with the sleep-deprived, insatiable eyes hidden behind aviator glasses, listening to Sublime's "Garden Grove" and making salutary gestures? It looks ironic but it feels sincere, at once in appreciation of and in resistance to. Getting to drink from the fountain of pop culture without becoming beholden to it. Unassimilated, but getting there with our complicity. Trying to keep our child heart without having Peter Pan Syndrome. We sure as hell aren't giving up, but the naivete is fast disappearing like invisible ink on paper.

We always show up in force, boots sloshing through the ubiquitous punk house backyard mudpit, comforting in the familiar presence of dog shit and bike tires. Wiping our feet off, a pause and then a timid knock on the door. Sometimes greeted with the squeals of lost friends from bygone eras, other times with vegan food and awkward, sincere introductions, still other times with curious sideways stares. It's no surprise we analyze and pick apart our hosts on the long drive the next day, rehashing the nights most ribald events and dissecting the most unfathomable personalities. Like tentacles, we move independently throughout the house, each feeler prodding and sniffing around in its own separate direction, but there is never any doubt that we're a unit. The ritual of the DIY show, cast over and over for us each night, like an incantation. A blip in the busy schedule of the promoter, that literally fuels (2.30 a gallon) our sustained reality. The figurative or literal "hat" being passed around, the unspoken rules established by the present majority (no one else is drinking, better to hold off). The self-congratulatory attitudes of both audience and performer, proud to have pulled off another surreptitious cultural event. It's no wonder we stay up late and celebrate, nursing a thirty rack of beer and flapping our gums with a bunch of strangers in a dirty bare-floored living room until the sun rises. Bodies wrapped like pretzels, tangled to fit on pee-stained mattresses haphazardly brought up from the basement and flopped on the floor at the end of the night. Drunk or sober, we're lacking in inhibitions.



fter too many hours laying on the carpeted floor of the van, the night highway warps and blurs, beginning to take on the apparition of a tortuous carnival ride. Plunging into convoluted darkness across topsy-turvy highway bridges, the steering wheel wobbling, veering us inches from the concrete barriers that would flip the van and spell our grisly, seatbelt-less demise. Writhing around corkscrew descents at breakneck speeds, past the looming hive-like industry, the cyclopean silhouettes of the mosquito-like oil wells tapping the supple veins of the bare landscape. Factory smoke lingering in the air like a dense fog, punctuated by the eye-socket burning glow of enormous gas station logos, strategically placed along the highway to trigger synapses which we are to recognize as a stop for rations, and a chance to engage in some innocent "snacktivism". Filling up travel mugs with coffee without paying and loitering looking at magazines no longer feels so deviant, having long since become as routine and unabashed as urinating in public or ignoring the posted "no trespassing" signs. Regardless, trucking on and continuing a lifelong dedication to stubbornness and tenacity. After not eating meat for a certain number of years, you stop having to defend yourself to grandma and she finally accepts your steadfast rejection.

Self-fulfilling prophecies and predilections.

Like knowing that it's going to be a bad show before we hit the first chord, based on our own clumsiness and lack of commitment. The awkwardness is contagious, spreading among bandmates in an Abbot and Costello routine of tripping over cords and knocking over beers onto the PA. Standing around after the show searching for the perfect word that means "a passionless ritual of going through the motions". That's how we played. Disappointing in that we let ourselves be discouraged by lack of refinement instead of just going at it sloppy and earnestly, and letting the music be the vessel to carry that sentiment. Later being strong-armed by a hulking sweaty, shirtless man into watching one of the worst bands I've ever seen. Trying to be respectful, but feeling insincere. Each show a microcosm, another chance at salvation. Each show a million excuses, cowardice and prejudice. Another chance to be rebirthed, stillborn in the womb.

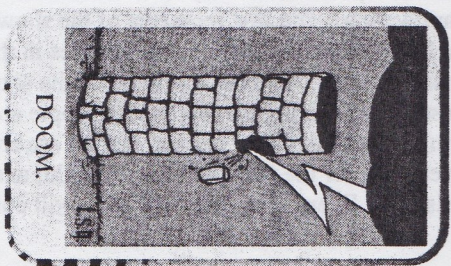
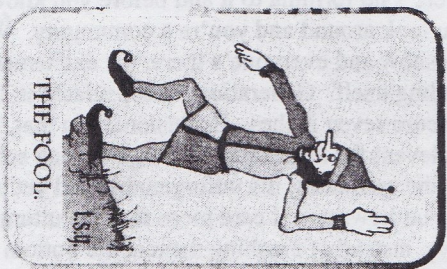


Wake up on the couch. Wake up on a dog-hair covered floor.
Wake up in an acquaintance's bed unsure of how you got there.
Wake up with a headache from a thick, dreamless sleep that
more closely resembles nonexistence than rest. Curled up on the
floor of the van in positions reserved for contortionists and
Olympic gymnasts. I don't wonder why my back is sore.
Pounding scalding hot mugs of black gas station sludge followed
by energy drinks, beer, then more sludge. I don't ask why I
wake up with a parched throat. Straining our bodies through
catharsis to collapse, all out of love and dedication. We are the
most vibrant, creative culture in the country, rich beyond all
material wealth. The culture that the record industry has
routinely "broken" for its most dynamic artists and documents.
The one the fashion magazines spy on for next years "trash chic"
(time to put away those fanny packs). We are the most
destructive, incoherent, self-flagellating individuals. Doubting
our own worth and vying for social credibility. The way people
buy a t-shirt before they look at the CDs or fanzines. We're still,
in 2006 following practically the same tour circuit that the SST
bands pioneered in the early 80's. This is at once grounding
with respect to history and continuity, but disconcerting in the
underlying feeling of stagnation. Until we have a more complete
genealogy, I put my faith in our hyperawareness. Self-aware,
self-maintaining and self-sufficient, like those new space-age
plastics that can locate their damage and heal themselves. We
can still sing our love songs and roll around in broken glass.

W

e are connected to the van by a bungi cord. Like toddlers, we can waddle out across the vast tarmac, the unknown tundra of a living room, only to be snapped back into containment. We're tourists, hardly ever-in a city longer than twelve hours. The quality of the city is judged on the quality of the show. Instead of connoisseurs of hotels and nice restaurants, we critique the attributes of the living room floor, it's texture and pliability, hardwood or carpet, and the amount of debris and cat-piss coating it's surface. We get handwritten directions to diners, the ones with the increasingly elusive 1.19 hashbrowns, eggs and toast breakfast special, where the waitresses are rude and have teardrop tattoos below their eyes. Cynicism and hope all tangled up in dirty, unwashed parkas and acne-erupted faces. The thick, musky smell of my T-shirt, comforting in its familiarity, having taken on the distinctive scent of the first punk house I ever set foot in. More complex than expensive wines. One girl came up to me at a show and sniffed my jacket. "Smells like the earth" she said. "that's diner, sweat, and gas station donuts", I corrected her. Greasy hair sticking up in every direction, and sore throats from screaming along to Sinead O' Connor and Alanis Morissette tapes.

There's no formula to it and before you know what's happened, you look around and you're a community. When you come to the show and everyone's there, the excitement and anticipation feeding itself. Generations encapsulated in the bleary photos of obscure seven inches. Exclusionary in that, like a yearbook, it's irrelevant for those who didn't go to high school with you. But for the graduates, it's unforgettable and yet under appreciated and underwritten. I care more for my cultural artifacts these days, instead of crushing them at the bottom of stolen Eckerds boxes and milk crates. Not to increase their collector's value on Ebay, but to have a tangible record of the things we did, the examples of our intimacy and purposeful limitation for the future generations. Not DIY and small-scale by necessity any more, when indie labels would obligingly put out the next big thing. We make a conscious choice. The nostalgic look in your eyes when I ramble on about summer two thousand whenever tells more than the perfunctory conversations about what we're doing now. Lost in our twenties, going to school, working as optometrist's assistants and nannies, having witnessed the last days of a dying anti-globalization movement and the rise of an impenetrable pseudo-fascistic government. Am I the only one who feels powerless? I try to focus on that which is empowering. The first moments of the show when everyone lurches forward together, sweaty bodies in the grips of an ecstatic unison. The last moments of the show, when everyone's on stage, screaming the words and people are crying, fans are being pulled out of the ceiling, worlds are crumbling. Flip the seven-inch for the twentieth time tonight, and remember what it feels like. Everything that falls apart will come back together.



Stagnation

2



((Sunn)) is booming up from the basement, the oozing primordial proto-drone dredging the depths of my subconscious to haul out the twisted frames of old regrets I thought I had dumped, acting as a significant counterweight to the antidepressant effects of the fresh pot of coffee. Orion speaks of ((Sunn)) reverently, as something menacing and terrible looming on the horizon of heavy music, growing in popularity exponentially alongside complacency with an unending war and increasing strangleholds on civil dissent. "Hopeless music for hopeless times", he shrugs. I obsess over it, as I do with all recently acquired music, paying attention to how the repetitive brown-note bass and layers of gritty, subtle noise cultivate my anxiety to a point of physical discomfort but then leave a gaping void to explore all those dark, untouchable fears. Ominous almost Lovecraftian premonitions of an inky windswept world, where people are caught in a flushing quagmire of the all-consuming doldrums. Once there it's easy to see the loss of self through a thousand routines and triviums. Moving mountains of sand with tweezers, emptying wells with eyedroppers, and losing sense of purpose and discipline to circumstance. Like an ill-fated game of Tetris, where your block structure is fucked and there's nothing you can do about it but sit back for the last moments of the game play itself, helplessly watching the blocks pile up before epileptic flashes signal "game over".

~~Humanity~~ humanity is still worth fighting for, but the question is, can you can pick your battle and not be overwhelmed by the overall immutable and dismal world picture? You don't say "ouch" when a bully punches you, you pick yourself up and sock him in the face. The same goes for when they turn the screws. Western leaders have publicly stated they want to restart nuclear energy programs after thirty years of inactivity. They didn't stop building reactors out of the kindness of their hearts, they stopped because of a million pinpricks. Do we have the endurance and vitality to stand up to these kinds of fights? Or are we only going to commit ourselves to artistic and cultural production?

Two days back in DC since tour ended and the sinking feeling is coming on, the return of cold weather conveniently coinciding with my rapidly declining positive outlook. I caught myself daydreaming on the couch about Elvis and Carlos Santana again, gnarled, callused fingers sliding up and down the neck of the guitar, coaxing unheard of, alien solos out of abused guitars. Freudian sexuality all tangled up with rock and roll cliches. That aside, the look on Santana's face in Woodstock: The Movie is orgasmic, and his passion for music ~~is~~ unassailable to the point where it brings a lump to my throat.

A

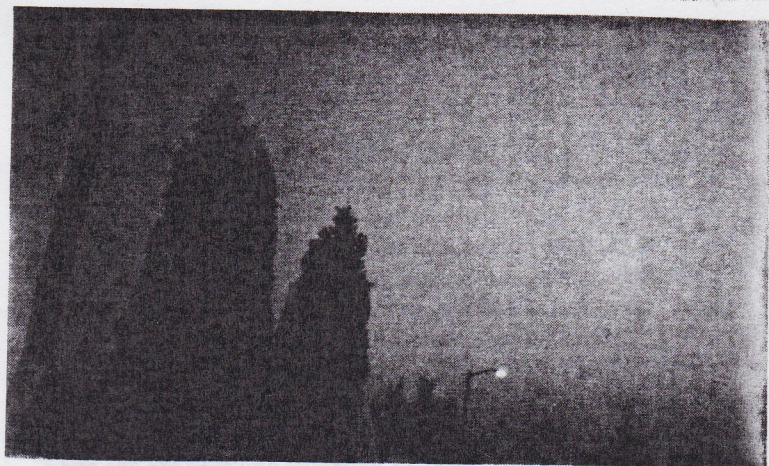
gain, trying to distract myself from thinking about the entire "to-do" lists I could fill with unresolved issues and social problems that have fermented and spoiled in my month-long absence.

Coming home late at night to find my basement room filled with piles of tie-dyes, Hindi dictionaries and marionette puppets when all I wanted to do is sink into bed and listen to records. Furious, but calmly scrawling a note reading:

"Thought Jesse told you I was coming home on the 15th. Guess not. Please move your stuff -Aaron"

Of course the stuff was never moved, and the mystery borrower who took all my CD's never confessed, ignoring my scrawled, empty threats on the house blackboard. So here I am, basement troll-guy, gritting my teeth and writing nostalgic, telescoping pamphlets from under mountains of fleece sweaters and long flowing skirts. Furious late night calls being yelled at and wrongly accused of eating a housemate's leftover curry. Under further examination, exonerating myself from the crime, but never receiving an apology. Only a slightly sheepish pause on the other end of the line and an "Oh..." Click. All events significant, incontrovertible signals pointing me to the glowing "EXIT" sign at the rear of the city.

ANGST! I am a harbinger of discontent, my mere presence in this city aggravating my friends' sense of contentment like an unscratchable itch. My constant dissatisfaction brings into question their satisfaction, causing an ache for something before unnecessary; a seething colonization triggering the release of the indigenous population's latent discontent. The inertia is contagious, the lack of will infectious. We are the inactive activists. Sitting in the basement listening to grim, heart-crushingly bleak Scandanavian records, unable to respond to any of the letters I've received or delve into my near untouched bookshelves stacked tall with volumes of interest. Depression is that you? A sense of foreboding is weighing down on me like a pile of bricks. I think I'm cursed. Listen: I Took out the trash yesterday and noticed something out of the corner of my eye suspiciously centered under the back gate. I Bent down to examine the object and gasped in abject horror at what I saw: A chalk white bird feather, with a macabre looking quill covered in coagulated blood and chunks of flesh, as if it had been ripped right out of the bird's back. Who would have wrought upon me such necromancy? Suspicion and mistrust reigns in the house.



AMNE

3 SLA

Suspicious, as usual, of the sketchy plans made on the craigslist rideshare board, I was sure Nolan would breeze through Greensboro, ditching me as nonconfrontationally as possible, through simple lack of communication. Our brief telephone exchanges discussed nothing of details of where we would meet, instead offered me strong context clues that he would be a gun-toting madman. When I asked about his occupation he gruffly replied, "Self-employed", and described his work in the parts trade, driving cars from Virginia to Texas and selling transmissions at exorbitant rates. His plan was simple: "Pick up two chicks in Asheville and split the gas and a cheap motel in Athens". These classic warning signs that I willingly ignored, nodding my head affably and agreeing to meet him somewhere near I-40. Nolan is more mild-mannered and normal than I could have ever expected. Hardly the knife-wielding human taxonomist that I expected to be sharing a Jetta with. He is a twenty-four year old goateed drummer who presents himself as the kind of guy that writes in to the weekly paper looking for "guitarist to collaborate with. influences: Mogwai, Modest Mouse and Coltrane". He is obsessive-compulsive about geography, reeling off the populations of major US cities and the quality of their economies in the middle of conversations about hot dogs and eighteenth century romantic literature.

"Austin has a great music scene. Population of seven hundred thousand, lots of good jobs", he reels off the statistics, at once attempting to convince me to move to Austin while singing the praises of the next up and coming place, raving about the booming job market in Athens, Georgia. The conversation inevitably turns to bands, and I am flashed back to my claustrophobic visits to Guitar Center with the purpose of buying a single electric guitar string, which would inevitably end with being accosted by young men wanting to talk about my "gear", bored and desperate guys with chops who foolishly think I might be in a band of some commercial significance.

"All the guitarists are in New York, man!" Nolan laments, widening the deep ravine between our realities, and causing me to furrow my brow at my lack of connection to his alien world. I note that he must exist in some kind of Superman's Bizzaro mirror universe, where drummers stand around on empty street corners, tapping on newspaper dispensers and shouting into the void:

"Where on earth could we POSSIBLY find some guitarists?"

"I'll travel anywhere on the Eastern Seaboard to collaborate, man... anywhere" he confides in me, desperately making unrequited plans to come visit me in Portland to "jam".

I nod enthusiastically, thoughtlessly presenting myself as a well-socialized and talkative "roadtripper", a façade I am sure to sheepishly once the two girls get in the car, at which point I will

betray

revert into my preferred state, the grumpy guy reading books in the backseat. We arrive at their house in Asheville in the rain. Nolan pulls into a gravel parking lot, and we drag ourselves inside to the sound of the drizzle on the windows. The two girls, as Nolan prophesized, are "hippie chicks" and are in a starkly decorated kitchen doing yoga and drinking organic oatmeal beers. They immediately impress me with their point-blank requests, quickly convincing the passive Nolan to stay the night in Asheville so they can hang out with friends. A move that I would never have the guts to make ██████ parasiting a ride from a stranger. I duck out of the house early when they pull out the Rumi book, preferring instead to walk around Asheville in the rain and track down old acquaintances at the all-night café.

The next day, passing by the Atlanta skyline, we pull off the highway so Nolan can buy cheap fabric at IKEA. He reveals himself as the always-imaginative entrepreneur, the proto-capitalist, excitedly subsisting through the sale of wholesale Volkswagen transmissions, government auctions, and as a carpenter building fabric room dividers.

"People with condos love it," he explains, awkward smile plastered on his face, slithering us through the labyrinthine Swedish furniture warehouse. Giant photo banners are strategically placed throughout the building displaying reassuring fatherly text from the IKEA junta explaining how cutting corners on material quality, labor rights, and extraneous decorative adornment helps keep the prices low for us, the consumers.

On the concrete staircase between the first and second floors I silently curse my philanthropic socialist benefactors, realizing the essential farce of their stylistic utilitarianism. Making flimsy, disposable products hip and affordable is the next obvious step for corporate irresponsibility and the degradation of human craftsmanship. Nolan can't find the fabric he needs and we walk out together into the gargantuan parking lot, four strangers squinting into the midday sun. Completely surrounded by cookie cutter condos that could have gone up this week or this year, as bleached-out and timeless as the pyramids, completely indistinguishable in their omnipresence. Mid-rise mausoleums from the 120's, all in walking distance of the IKEA. From an airplane, yuppies carrying home their new coffee table would bear an uncanny resemblance to ants struggling with a crumb of moldy bread. We are at once both pointless and resilient. The cities look more similar every year, traveling a constant barrage of déjà vu and cheap vinyl siding. Not even the same cities anymore, each one unrecognizable from five years ago, the prevalent revitalization theory being to bulldoze everything and give the red carpet to subsidized construction and franchises. These bright, well thought out ideas designed to fix our lifestyle problems and social inequities. The way the Greensboro City Council defibrillates the dying economy with a farm league baseball stadium.



he rain pounding on the windshield in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. We're parked in front of a vanilla, college-style home. Sitting in an uncomfortable silence, waiting for another passive-aggressive capitulation from Nolan to satiate the increasingly pushy hippie girls. We are discussing whether to stop for the night to visit the two girls' grad school friend. I am quiet and un-opinionated for once, awestruck by their awesome and tenacious superpower of turning this cheap ride to their advantage, making a twenty-four hour drive a three-day trip. On a surface level, the language is simple and direct: "We want to visit our friend. We could stop in Tuscaloosa and stay for the night?" But the decision is really being made by the underlying currents of tension zapping around the car like microwaves, power games being played out in penetrating glares and intonations. It's decided that we'll stay in Tuscaloosa with a flourishing, fatherly sigh of acceptance from Nolan, and we head inside. Greeted in the foyer by an overenthusiastic English grad student, wearing one of those long scarves that bohemian writers often sport. She shows us around her clean house, filled with sundry Sundance films and a bookshelf stacked with British literature and Grecian tragedies. She is a writer, proud and dependent on her craft to define her kooky identity, completely without the shame and fear of fulfilling the self-indulgent stereotype.

new



year

VERSE:

another year down the shitter
walking dogs in mid-december
i can't help getting bitter
they say hate the sin but love the sinner
endless days in a windowless cell
like mirrors reflecting back on themselves
it's a living hell
another self-indulgent story to tell

CHORUS:

and just when it seemed
like i was running on the hamster wheel
then i start to see
that moving forward looks like standing still

VERSE

i swear this year i'll remember
gasoline fires in the dead of winter
i swear this year i'll remember
gasoline fires in the dead of winter
and this year will be better
if we can see it through together
and this year will be better
if we can see it through together

CHORUS:

and when i start to feel stuck
come over and we'll go FUCK SHIT UP
yeah we're still being punk
when we're over forty and passed out drunk
please don't fall off the map
just be straightforward and CUT THE CRAP
we'll just keep being rats
trashing their stores with blasting caps

LAST VERSE:

when they sell us our sound
we'll burrow deeper underground
we can only be found
in the dirty basements of the shithole towns
we will wear cotton crowns(sonic youth respect)
even when we're buried six feet underground
and when i come back around
please take me to the old stomping ground
when i come back around
please take me to the old stomping ground

AMNESIA! Days and weeks blending together again. Jolted awake in the dark, the windowless dark that always feels like four AM, by a phone call from my boss.

"Aaron, we need you to come in this morning. Pick up the keys at John's house."

I audibly groan and step out of my room onto the icy concrete floor, squinting at the deflected, overcast daylight coming in at the end of the long basement hallway, in a pitiful attempt to "check the weather". Up the dirty stairs and into the musty kitchen, I'm on my bike and out the door. Flying down Georgia Avenue I have the first of my bi-daily realizations of how much I hate Washington, DC. Cursing and sweating and almost getting run over, ignoring the biting frost on my finger tips and the remarkably high concentration of rude mentally deranged people walking around mumbling to themselves. I park my bike in front of Bolero's house, and go inside and leash up the pushy basset hound before going next door to pick up Radar and Barney, thus completing my Cerberus, the unholy trinity of nightmarishly ill-trained dogs. Keeping the three-headed hellhound under control is impossible, and walking them is equivalent to herding a flock of cats. Bolero is the silent leader, headstrong and belligerent, tugging at his leash and giving me rope burn. Radar is a stately, white, Irish-looking terrier, who after a series of experiments, I correctly identify as a racist. Barney, appropriately named, is the dopiest of the three, with a penchant for entangling himself around telephone poles and chasing squirrels. Every day with them feels like I'm starting over, as if they don't recognize me but are adept at seeing and abusing my libertarian approach to leash control.

SHARA'S BAD DREAM:

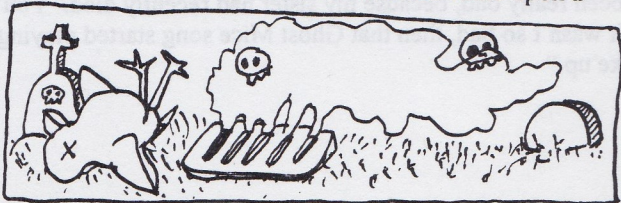
"We were living in a house with a piano and lots of friends, but also my sisters who kept getting sick and upset and I would need to take care of them. I was really maternal in the dream. You and I went on a walk and came to field that became a graveyard. Not a traditional graveyard- on one side was a concrete sidewalk with vents on it and the other side was grass, and people were buried under the grass part and there were personal objects as gravemarkers. We came to a plot that was fresh, the grass hadn't grown over the dirt yet but there was a blanket/tapestry over the dirt. Then we realized it was YOUR grave, and we were like, whoa, it's weird to be standing where you're buried. It wasn't a contradiction of any kind that I was living with you and we were discussing the fact that you were dead and buried. When we were ready to walk back, there was a bird on your blanket and you picked up the bird and told it to make sure it took care of you, and you lifted up a corner of the blanket to look at the dirt underneath and then walked away. We walked away on the sidewalk and talked about how bad it smelled because they were burning bodies under us, like that was what the vents were for. I asked you if the burning had been really bad, because my sister had recently died. You said that it wasn't so bad, then that Ghost Mice song started playing and I woke up."



Graveyard or city, they look the same at four in the morning. Walking across the deserted landscape, dotted not with headstones like the Rock Creek Church Cemetery, where only hours before we desecrated the granite necropolis with candle wax, tinny black metal, and libations in an illegal gathering, which had quickly become the praxis of a song by Filth called "live the chaos". But now, trudging past rotting businesses and abandoned houses, alone on my way to the bus station. Leaving town again while my friends stumble home giggling, falling into warm beds wrapped in the arms of waiting lovers. And here I am, bundled up in my silly looking jacket and watching the wind stir the leaves in the empty streets, and the giant rats scuttle around on the sidewalks. Still half-drunk but wide-eyed and content with the motion of my shuffling feet to keep me awake. It's just me and the crazies at this hour, perhaps a paperboy or chipper early riser interspersed into the mix. Down the hill on 18th street an old man waves to me, walking out on his stoop to get the morning paper.

"Good morning", he waves, his salutation officially ringing in the coming dawn.

I nod and walk on, with only an inkling of how to get to my destination. I decide to ask directions and come upon a



wandering mumbler, one of the district's many forgotten spirits, one of the walking dead who disappear at the first stirrings from the waking world.

"Just take...north cap to a...to be", he whispers, creepy dreamlike slurs matching his ghost-like lumpen social status, clearly having perfected the survival skill of sleepwalking. I make some excuses and pardon myself for bothering him. The District of Columbia is a huge broken grid, a mockery of it's own meticulous city planning. Streets stop and start again, unwalkable due to a never-ending parade of construction projects and condos going up on every derelict street corner. I manage to spiral myself into a baneful mindset dwelling on how fucked up it is that my neighbors that sit on their front porch drinking cheap beer are gainfully employed at the World Bank. Stuck again in the lock-groove realization that I share a geographic space with the government of the United States of America. The scatological fact that my poop flushes and swirls with Donald Rumsfeld's, our DNA and the contents of our stomachs becoming one in a vat somewhere. A smiling Dr. Bronner appears out of nowhere, the mystic soap guru consoling me with his reassuring coos of "All one.... All one..."



I'm jolted back into the present by a man pushing a shopping cart ahead of me with the vigor of a Million Dollar Shopping Spree contestant. My lack of direction protracts beyond my unfamiliar temporal surroundings and inability to find the bus station to the bigger existential questions of why I'm sharing a sewage system with George Bush or for that matter, a country with him. I decide to stop and ask for a little spiritual guidance. Could you help me find my way? The shopping cart christ swerving alongside me turns to me with an enthusiasm only contraband stimulants or searing prophetic visions could supply and flashes me a toothy Mike-Tyson grin, and screams "YOU'RE ON T-T-THE RIGHT TRACK MAN! JUST KEEP ON GOING! JUST KEEP ON GOING! YOU'RE ALMOST THERE!"

bouncing excitedly and pointing down the block past the corner McDonald's towards the rising sun.

The act of consecration on the stained linoleum floor of the Greyhound Bus Station is sanctimonious: at best overly ritualistic and overdone. I've always been one for traditions. Christening a new journal here in the hallowed, familiar halls of outsider travel, searching for the coffee stains and carved initials of those who came before me. I've been taking notes again, overly self-aware in the foolish hope that I won't make the same mistakes.



Two guys are on their hands and knees in the men's bathroom, playing dice on the vomit green colored floor, a tragic landscape of crumpled bills, pubic hair and mildew. On the bus, the unspoken rule is clean socks and cheap cologne, but never will you be judged on the lengths that you will go for money. No debit cards here and even less legitimate forms of identification, everyone is paying cash and everyone has their reasons to leave. The Greyhound station is a netherworld, existing as a microcosm inside the rest of society, an entire social class definable not by their income or job, but by their method of transport. Sustained by subsidies and hardly competitive, it's not the unreasonable ticket prices that draw people to put up with spotty safety records, long lines, and tweaker drivers who have no qualms with ditching entire busloads of waiting passengers (this happened in Richmond). This is the price to pay for invisibility, for no questions asked. Overworked and underpaid, the employees hardly glance at my shoddily assembled and laminated bus pass, give me a nod and wave me through, all-access to writhe my way through the bloated intestinal tract of Middle America.



read and listened to:

- Sunn: the Grimrobe demos
- the des ark solo tape
- Lemuria demo
- "nonconformity" by ne'son algren
- "dostoevsky" by andre gide
- "trout fishing in america" by brautigan
- "at the mountains of madness" by brautigan
- by h.p lovecraft
- "revolutionary road" by richard yates
- the halo benders: god dont make no junk
- "the prophet" kallil ribran
- the velvet underground
- punk'n ple



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"I say we had best look our times
and lands searchingly in the face,
like a physician diagnosing some
deep disease. Never was there,
perhaps, more hollowness at heart
than at present and here in the
United States...It is as if ~~XXXXX~~
somehow being endowed with a ~~YAT~~
vast and more thoroughly ~~XXXXXX~~
appointed body, and then left with
little, or no soul."

-Walt Whitman

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"how'd you get on stuff in the first place, pusher?"

"Too much vitality, cat. Vitality was running away with me. I'd go three days without sleep n' knock off two hours and be ready to take off again. Got into all sorts of hell for no reason but to make something happen. Now I go two hours and I'm ready to knock off for three days. It's how I stay out of t rouble."



THEY WANT
ME TO SLEEP.

